

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
EMPEROR MANALAY,
AND HIS
VIRTUOUS WIFE.

A Story taken from ancient History

*Here Virtue got it's just Reward,
Tho' cost the Fair much Pain;
As you shall quickly understand,
When you peruse the same.*



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THE
HISTORY
OF

Manalay and his cruel Brother:

OR, THE

CHASTE EMPRESS.

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IN Rome there once dwelt a mighty Emperor named MANALAY, who had wedded the King's Daughter of Hungaria, a fair lady and graceful in all her work, especially she was merciful. On a time as the Emperor lay in his bed, he bethought himself that he would go to visit the HOLY LAND, And on the morrow, he called to him the Empress his wife, and his own only brother, and thus he said: Dear Lady, I may not, nor will not hide from you

the privities of my heart, I purpose to visit the Holy Land, wherefore, I ordain thee principally to be lady and governess over all my empire, and all my people; and under thee I ordain here my brother to be thy steward, and to provide all things that may be profitable to my empire and my people.

Then said the empress, since it will no otherwise be, but that thou wilt needs go to visit the city of Jerusalem, I shall be in your absence as true as any turtle that has lost her mate; for as I believe you shall not escape thence with your life.

The emperor then comforted her with fair words and kissed her, and after that took his leave of her and all others, and went to the city of Jerusalem.

And anon after the emperor was gone, his brother became so proud that he oppressed poor men and robbed rich men; and he did worse than this, for he daily stirred the empress to commit sin with him: But she ever answered again as an holy and devout woman, and said, I will (quoth she) never con-

sent to you nor to any other as long as my lord liveth: nevertheless, this knight would not leave off with this answer, but ever when he found her alone, he made his complaint to her, and stirred her by all the way that he could to sin with him.

When this lady saw that he would not cease for any answer, nor would not amend himself; when she saw her time, she called to her three or four of the worthiest men of the empire, and said to them thus: Is it not known to you, that my lord the emperor ordained me principal governor of this empire, and has also ordained his brother to be steward under me, and that he should do nothing without my counsel, but he doth all contrary, and he oppresseth greatly poor men, and likewise robbeth the rich: And yet he would do more than this if he might have his intent; wherefore I command you in my Lord's name, that you bind him fast and cast him into prison.

Then said they, inasmuch as he hath done many evil deeds since our lord the emperor went away, therefore we are ready to obey your com-

mards, but in this matter you must answer for us to our lord the emperor.

Then said she, dread ye not, if my lord knew what he hath done as well as I, he would put him to the foulest death that could be thought. Immediately these men laid hands on him, and bound him fast with iron chains and put him into prison, where he lay a long time after, till at last it happened there came tidings, that the emperor was coming home, and had obtained great renown and victory. When his brother heard of his coming, he said, I would to God, my brother might not find me in prison, for if he do, he will enquire the cause of my imprisonment of the empress, and she will tell him all the truth how I moved her to commit sin, and so on her account I shall have no favour of my brother, but lose my life; this know I well: Therefore it shall not be so. Then sent he a messenger unto the empress, praying her that she would vouchsafe to come to the prison door, that he might speak a word or two with her.

The empress came to him, and en-

quired of him what he would have:
He answered and said, O lady! have
mercy upon me, for if the emperor
my brother find me in prison, then
shall I die without any remedy.

Then said the empress, if I might
know that thou wouldest be a good
man, and leave thy folly, thou should-
est find grace. Then did he promise
her assuredly to be true, and amend
all his trespasses. When he had thus
promised, the empress delivered him
anon, and made him to be bathed
and shaven, and apparelled him wor-
thily according to his state, and then
she said unto him thus: Now, good-
brother, take thy steed and come with
me, that we may meet my lord. He
answered and said, lady, I am ready
to fulfill your will and commandment
in all things, and then the empress
took him with her and many other
knights, and so rode forth to meet
the emperor: and as they rode toge-
ther by the way, they saw a great hart
run before them, wherefore every man
with such hounds as they had, chased
him on horse back, so that with the
empress was left no creature save on-

ly the emperor's brother, who seeing that no man was there but they two, thus he said unto the empress; Lo, lady, here is nigh us a private forest, and long it is ago that I spoke to thee of love, come now and consent unto me that I may lie with thee.

Then said the empress, Ah! fool, what may this be! yesterday I delivered thee out of prison upon thy promise in hope of amendment, and now thou art returned to thy folly again, wherefore I say now unto thee, as I have said before, there shall no man do such a thing with me, save only my lord the emperor, which he ought of very duty to do. Then, said he, if thou wilt not consent to me, I shall hang thee here upon a tree in this forest, where no man shall find thee, and so shalt thou die an evil death. The empress answered meekly and said, though thou smite off my head, or put me to death with all manner of torment, thou shalt never have my consent to such a sin.

When he heard this, he uncloathed her all save her smock, and hanged her up by the hair upon a tree, and

ried her self before her, and so rode
to his fellows, and told them that a
great host of men met him, and took
the empress away from him, and when
he had told them this, they all made
great lamentation.

It befel on the third day after, there
came an earl to hunt in that forest,
and as he rode beating the bushes, he
unkennels a fox, which his hounds
followed fast, till they came near the
tree where the empress hanged. And
when the dogs smelt the savour of her,
they left the fox, and ran towards the
tree as fast as they could.

The earl, seeing this, wondered
greatly, and spurring his horse, fol-
lowed them, till he came where the
empress hanged, when the earl saw
her thus hanging, he marvelled great-
ly, for as much as she was right fair
and beautiful to behold; wherefore,
he said unto her in this wise; O wo-
man, who art thou? and of what coun-
try? and wherefore hanigest thou here
in this manner?

The empress that was not yet fully
dead, but at the point ready to die, an-
swered and said, I am (quoth she) a

strange woman, and am come out of a far country, but how I came hither, God knoweth. Then answered the earl, and said, whose horse is this that standeth by thee bound to this tree? Then answered the lady, and said, that it was her's. When the earl heard this, he saw well that she was a gentlewoman, and come of noble lineage, wherefore he was the rather moved with pity, and said to her, O fair lady, thou seemest of noble blood, and therefore, I purpose to deliver thee from this mischief, if thou wilt promise to go with me, and nourish my fair young daughter, and teach her at home in my castle, for I have no child but only her, and, if you keep her well thou shalt have a good reward for thy labour. Then said she, as far forth as I can or may, I shall fulfil your intent. And when she had thus promised him, he took her down off the tree, and led her home to his castle, and gave her the keeping of his daughter, that he loved so much, and she was cherished so well, that she lay every night in the earl's chamber, and his daughter with her: And in

the chamber every night there burned a lamp, which hanged between the empress's bed and the earl's bed. This lady behaved herself so gently, that she was beloved of every creature. There was at that time in the earl's house a steward, who loved much this empress, and often spoke to her of his love. But she answered him again, and said, Know, dear friend, for a certainty, that I will never love any man in such a manner, but only him whom I am greatly bound to love by God's commandments.

Then said the steward, Then thou wilt not consent unto me? Sir, quoth she) what need you any more to ask such things! The vow that I have made I will truly keep, and hold by the grace of God.

And when the steward heard this, he went his way in great wrath and anger, thinking within himself, If I may, I shall be revenged on thee.

It befel upon a night within short time after, that the earl's chamber-door was forgotten and left unshut, which the steward had anon perceiv- ed. And when they were all asleep,

he went and espied by the light of the lamp where the empress and the maiden lay together, and with that he drew out his knife, and cut the throat of the earl's daughter, and put the knife into the empress's hand, she being asleep, and not knowing thereof, to the intent that when the earl awaked, he should think that she had cut his daughter's throat, and so would she be put to a shameful death for this mischievous deed. And when the damsel was thus slain, and the bloody knife in the empress's hand, the countess awaked out of her sleep, and saw by the light of the lamp the bloody knife in the empress's hand, wherefore, she was almost out of her wits, and said to the earl, O my lord! Behold in yonder lady's hand a wonderful thing.

The earl awakened, and looked towards the empress's bed, and saw the bloody knife, as the countess had said: Wherefore he was greatly moved, and cried to her, and said, Awake woman out of sleep, what thing is this that I see in thy hand: Then the empress through his cry, awaked out of her

sleep, and in her waking, the knife fell out of her hand, and with that she looked by her, and found the earl's daughter dead by her side, and all the bed besprinkled with blood, wherefore with an high voice she cried and said, alas! alas! and woe is me, My lord's daughter is slain.

Then cried the countess unto the earl, with a piteous voice, and said, O my lord, let this devilish woman be put to the foulest death that can be thought, which has thus slain our only child.

Then when the countess had thus said unto the earl, he said to the Empress in this wise, The high God knoweth, that thou, mischievous woman, hast slain my daughter with thine own hands, for I saw the bloody knife in thy hand, and therefore thou shalt die a foul death. Then said the earl in this wise: O thou woman, were it not I dread God greatly, I should cleave thy body with my sword in two parts, for I delivered thee from hanging, and now thou hast slain my daughter, nevertheless, from me thou shalt have no harm, therefore,

go thy way out of this city without any delay, for if I find thee here after this day, thou shalt die a most cruel death.

Then arose this woeful empress and put on her clothes, and after leapt on her palfrey, and rode toward the east alone without any safe conduct; and as she rode thus mourning by the way, she espied on the left side of the way, a pair of gallows, and seven officers, leading a man to be hanged, wherefore she was moved with great pity, and smote her horse with her stick, and rode up to them, praying them, she might redeem that mildoe, if he might be saved from death by any means.

Then said they, lady, it pleaseth us well that you redeem him. Anon, the empress accorded with them, and paid his ransom, and he was delivered.

Then said she to him, Now my good friend, be true to me 'till thou die, since I have delivered thee from death.

On my soul (quoth he) I promise you ever to be true. And when he

had thus said, he followed the lady, till they came near a city, and then said the empress to him, good friend, go forth thy way before me into the city: and see thou take up for us an honest lodging, for there I purpose to rest a while. Her man went forth as she commanded, and took up for her a good and honest lodging, where she abode a long time. When the men of the city perceived her beauty, they wondered greatly, wherefore many of them craved of her unlawful love, but all was in vain for they might not speed in any wise.

It happened after upon a day, that there came a ship full of merchandize, and arrived in the haven of that city: When the lady heard this, she said unto her servant, Go to the ship and see if there be any cloth for my use.

Her servant went forth to the ship where he found many very fine clothes: wherefore he prayed the master of the ship, that he would come into the city, and speak with his lady. The master granted him, and so the servant came home to his lady before, and

warned her of the coming of the master of the ship. Soon after the master of the ship came and saluted her courteously: And the lady received him according to his degree, praying him that she might have for her money such cloth as might be convenient for her wearing. Then he granted that she should have any thing that she liked, and soon they were agreed, wherefore the servant went immediately again with the master of the ship for the cloth. And when they were both within on ship-board, the master said to the lady's servant: My dear friend, to thee I would open my mind, if I might trust to thee, and if thou help me, thou shalt have of me a great reward. Then answered he, and said: I shall (quoth he) be sworn to thee to keep thy counsel, and fulfil thine intent as far forthwith as I can.

Then said the master of the ship, I love thy lady more than I can tell thee for her beauty and feature is so excellent, that I would give for the love of her, all the gold that I have: And I may obtain the love of her through

thy help, I will give thee whatever thou wilt desire of me.

Then said the lady's servant, tell me by what means I may help thee.

Then said the master of the ship, go home to thy lady again, and tell her, that I will not deliver to thee the cloth except she come herself; and do thou but bring her to my ship, and if the wind be good and fit, then I purpose to lead her away. Thy counsel is good, quoth the lady's servant, therefore give me some reward and I shall fulfil thy desire.

Now when he had received his reward, he went again to the lady and told her, that by no means the master of the ship would deliver him the cloth, except she came herself.

The lady believed her servant, and went to the ship. Now when she was within the ship-board, her servant abode without.

When the master saw that she was within the ship, and that the wind was good, he drew up the sail and sailed forth.

When the lady perceived this, thus she said to the master, O master,

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(quoth she) what treason is that thou hast done to me? The master answered, and said, Madam, certainly it is so, that I must needs lie with thee, and afterwards espouse thee. O good sir, quoth she, I have made a vow, that I shall never do such a thing but with him unto whom I am bound by right and by the law. Soothly, (quoth he) you will not grant it me with your good will, I will cast you out into the midst of the sea, and there shall you die an evil death: If it be so (quoth she) that I must needs consent or else die; first, I pray thee, to prepare a private place in the end of the ship, whereas, I may fulfil thine intent ere I die, and also, I pray thee, that I may say my prayers unto the Father of Heaven, that he may have mercy on me.

The master believed her, wherefore he did ordain her a cabin in the end of the ship, wherein she kneeled down on both her knees, and made her prayer, saying on this wise, "O thou my Lord God, thou hast kept me from my youth in cleanness, keep me now that I be not defloured, so that I may ever serve thee with a clean heart and mind, and let not this wicked man prevail with

ne, nor any other like wickedness come
igh me. When she had ended her
prayers, there arose suddenly a great
tempest in the sea, so that the ship
broke all in pieces, and all that were
therein perished, save the lady, as they
thought; and she caught a cable and
saved herself, and the master caught a
board of the ship and saved himself
likewise: Nevertheless she knew not of
him, nor he of her, for they were driven
to divers' coasts. The lady landed
in her own empire, near to a rich city
wherein she was honourably received,
and she lived so holy a life, that God
gave her grace and power to heal sick
folk of all manner of diseases: Where-
fore there came much people to her,
both crooked, blind, and lame, and
every man through the grace of God,
and her good behaviour, was healed,
wherefore her name was known
through divers regions. Nevertheless
she was not known as the empress.
At the same time the emperor's brother
that had hanged her before by the hair
was smitten with a foul leprosy. The
knight that slew the earl's daughter
and put the bloody knife in her hand,
was blind, deaf, and had the palsy.

The thief that betrayed her to the master of the ship, was lame and full of the cramp. And the master of the ship deprived of his wits.

When the emperor heard that so holy a woman was in the city, he called his brother, and said to him thus, Let us go, dear brother, unto this holy woman that is dwelling in this city, that she may heal thee of thy leprosy. Would to God, O noble brother (quoth he) that I were healed. Anon, the emperor with his brother went towards the city. Then when the citizens heard of his coming, they received him honourably, with procession and all provision becoming his estate. And then the emperor enquired of the citizens, if any such holy woman was among them, that could heal sick folk of their diseases. The citizens answered and said, that such an one there was. Now at the same time was come to the same city, the knight who slew the earl's daughter, and the thief which she saved from the gallows, and the master of the ship who had betrayed her, to be healed of their diseases.

Then was the empress called forth before the emperor, but she muffled

her face as well as she could, that the emperor, her husband, should not know her; and when she had so done, he saluted him with great reverence, as appertained to his state: And again, he in like manner, saying thus, O good lady, if thou please of thy kindness to heal my brother of this leprosy, ask of me what thou wilt, and I shall grant it for thee.

When the empress heard this, she looked about her, and saw there the emperor's brother a foul leper; she saw there also the knight that slew the earl's daughter, blind and deaf: The thief that she saved from the gallows, lame: And also, the master of the ship, deprived of his wits, and all were come to her to be healed of their maladies, and knew her not. But though they knew her not, she knew them well. Then said she unto the emperor thus, My reverend lord, though you would give me all your empire, I cannot heal your brother, nor any of these other, except they acknowledge openly what great evil they have done.

When the emperor heard this, he turned him towards his brother, and said unto him; Brother, acknowledge openly thy sin, before all these men, that thou

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mayst be healed of thy sickness. Then anon he began to tell how he had led his life: but he told not how he hanged the empress in the forest by the hair of the head most despitefully.

When he had acknowledged all he thought fit, the empress replied, and said, Soothly my lord, I would gladly lay unto him my medicine, but I know right well it is in vain, for he hath not made a full confession.

The emperor hearing this he turned towards his brother, and said in this wise, What evil, sorrow, or other unhappy wretchedness is in thee? Seest thou not, how that thou art a foul leper? Therefore acknowledge thy sin truly, that thou mayest be whole, or else avoid my company for evermore.

Ah, my lord (quoth he) I dare not tell my life openly except I be sure of thy pardon. What hast thou trespassed against me? said the emperor, Then answered his brother, and said, Mine offence against thee is grievous, and therefore I ask thee heartily forgiveness. The emperor thought not on the empress, forasmuch as he supposed, she had been dead many years before; he commanded his brother to tell forthwith wherein he had offended him, and he should be forgiven.

When the emperor had thus forgiven his brother, he began to tell openly how he had desired the empress to commit adultery with him, and because she denied, he hanged her by the hair in the forest on such a day.

When the emperor heard this, he was almost

beside himself, and in this rage he said thus; O thou wretched creature, the vengeance of God is fallen upon thee, were it not that I have pardoned thee, thou shouldst die the most shameful death that could be thought of.

Then said the knight that slew the earl's daughter, I wot not, quoth he, what lady you are, but I wot that my lord found on a time such a lady hanging in the forest, and brought her home to his castle, and he took her and gave her his daughter to keep, and I provoked her as much as I could to sin with me; but she would in no wise consent unto me, wherefore I slew the earl's daughter that lay with her, and when I had so done, I put the bloody knife in the lady's hand, that the earl should think that she had slain his daughter with her own hand, and then she was exiled thence, but where she went I wot not.

Then said the thief, I wot not of what lady you speak; but well I wot that seven officers were leading me to the gallows, and such a lady came riding by, and bought me of them: And then went I with her, and afterwards I betrayed her unto the master of the ship.

Such a lady, quoth the master of the ship, received I, and when we were in the midst of the sea, I would have lain with her, but she kneeled down to her prayers, and anon there arose such a tempest, that the ship broke all in pieces, and all therein were drowned save she and I, but afterwards what became of her I know not.

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Then cried the empress with a loud voice, and said, Soothly, dear friends, Ye do now truly confess and declare the truth, wherefore I will now apply my medicine, and anon they received their healths.

When the lady the empress had thus done, she uncovered her face to the emperor, and he forthwith knew her, and ran to her and embraced her in his arms, and kissed her oftentimes; and for joy he wept bitterly: Saying, Blessed be God, now I have found what I have desired. And when he had thus said, he led her once more to his palace with great joy; and after, when it pleased Almighty God, they ended both their lives in peace and rest.

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